

Chief James McGee Receives Kansas EMSC Award

The presentation of the 'Cara Everhart' Award to Battalion Chief James A. McGee of the Overland Park Fire Department highlighted the 2005 Annual "Last Blast of Summer" Kansas Emergency Medical Services Association (KEMSA) Conference held at the Overland Park Marriott Aug.18-21.

Kansas Emergency Medical Services for Children (EMSC), a program from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment's Office of Health Promotions, co-sponsored the event. Its mission is to prevent childhood illness and injury and to reduce mortality and morbidity in children and adolescents. When prevention fails, EMSC strives to ensure that the state of the art emergency medical care is easily accessible and received from emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics, emergency department personnel, and rehabilitations specialists, if needed.



Chief James McGee

This year's conference provided both pediatric and adult EMS education to over 300 EMS providers. In addition, there were over 40 vendors on site to provide demonstrations on the most up-to-date equipment

Each year Kansas EMSC accepts nominations for the "Cara Everhart Award." This award is given to an outstanding individual or group of individuals that has shown excellence and dedication to pediatric emergency care and childhood injury prevention initiatives including educators, child advocacy groups, pre-hospital professionals, or any medical professional who works directly with injury prevention or care of an injured child. The award is presented at the KEMSA Conference Banquet.

With 30 plus years of service, Chief McGee is currently a Battalion Chief for Overland Park Fire Department. McGee holds a Kansas EMT certification, and is a graduate of the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Office Program.

McGee's nomination for the EMSC award reads:

"Battalion Chief James A. (Jim) McGee is a prime example of a transformational leader. Chief McGee saw a need in our community for a fire educational program designed and promoted to our pediatric special needs community.

Two years ago Chief McGee identified the absence of programs that allowed the extra care and time for special needs kids to learn about fire and EMS safety. Jim organized the first "Special Needs Day" at the Overland Park Fire Department in the spring of 2004. This day was a marked success that saw almost 100 individuals and families come to the OPFD Fire Training Center for a day of rides, hands-on learning, and friendship. The idea bloomed, in the spring of 2005 the second special needs day became a reality.

On May 21, 2005 chief McGee coordinated the organization of five neighboring fire departments, OPFD office staff, and volunteers from the citizens CERT program for the second "Special Needs Day". This day brought 411 kids and family members to a day of activities specifically designed to get them hands-on experience. Firefighters and paramedics were assigned to greet the arriving friends and provide them a safe, educational, and fun day at the fire department.

"Special Needs Day" was once again a great success. Family members have called and written thanking the OPFD for the thoughtful approach to providing specialized education to a very specific group. This targeted tactic paid to not only the OPFD but to the individuals that met a new friend. Relations were forged and memories created that will last a lifetime. A note sent to the OPFD from a family that attended the "2005 Special Needs Day" read:

"We want to thank you and all of the wonderful firefighters who put on such a special event last Saturday (the open house for the Special Needs Kids and families). We don't get out much and had never been to anything like that and enjoyed it very much. Our 5-year-old daughter is non-verbal with other developmental delays. She smiled and we know she thought it was cool! Your hard work and commitment to families and our community are appreciated. If you need assistance from our family in the future, don't hesitate to contact us!" - Shane, Kimberly, Allison, and Olivia Morris

The Kansas EMSC award is named after Cara Everhart, a 10-year girl that died from chicken pox and immune system complications.

Learn more about the EMSC program on its Web site:
<http://www.kdhe.state.ks.us/emsc/index.html>.